

DATELINE: WASHINGTON, D.C. #127  
ALINA ZERANSKI

NOVEMBER 10, 1976

THE LITTLE WHITE CHURCH ON THE BATTLEFIELD  
(INSERTS IN TAPE LIBRARY)

ANNCR: DATELINE: WASHINGTON, D.C. -- PICTURES IN SOUND OF PEOPLE, PLACES AND EVENTS IN AND AROUND THE NATION'S CAPITAL -- BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE VOICE OF AMERICA EACH WEEK AT THIS TIME. TODAY, A REPORT PREPARED BY ALINA ZERANSKI ON A HISTORIC LANDMARK THAT IS CHERISHED AS A SYMBOL OF CONTINUITY AND STRONG FAITH OF THE COMMUNITY THAT BUILT IT.

NARR: A FEELING OF STILLNESS AND PEACE SURROUNDS THE SMALL WHITE CATHOLIC CHURCH OF ST. MARY IN FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA. IT IS A TYPICAL AMERICAN CLAPBOARD CHURCH FROM THE PREVIOUS CENTURY, SIMPLE AND MODEST, PURE IN DESIGN AND CHARMING WITH ITS RED STEEPLE OVERLOOKING THE COUNTRYSIDE. BUILT ON A SMALL HILL, THE CHURCH IS SURROUNDED BY THE PARISH CEMETERY. DURING THE CIVIL WAR, IT WAS A SCENE OF DRAMATIC EVENTS, THE VERY SOIL SOAKED WITH THE BLOOD OF BOTH CONFEDERATE AND UNION SOLDIERS. MANY OF THEM WERE BURIED HERE, THEIR BODIES LATER MOVED TO THE NEARBY ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY. ONLY ONE CONFEDERATE GRAVE SOMEHOW REMAINS ON THE EDGE OF THE CHURCH COURTYARD AMONG TALL TREES THAT REMEMBER THE SECOND BATTLE OF MANASSAS.

TAPE: CUT ONE -- O'CONNOR

"THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY WAS PROBABLY GATHERED HERE AROUND 1838, 1840, AND THEN THE PARISHIONERS BUILT THIS LITTLE CHURCH IN AROUND ABOUT 1859, THEY STARTED. THEN IN 1860, THE BISHOP OF RICHMOND CAME UP AND DEDICATED IT FOR THE PEOPLE."

NARR: THAT WAS REVEREND RAYMOND O'CONNOR, PASTOR OF THIS COMMUNITY. ST. MARY'S STILL SERVES ITS ORIGINAL PURPOSE AS IT HAS FOR OVER A CENTURY. AND THE PEOPLE OF THE PARISH ARE PROUD OF THEIR CHURCH. JUST RECENTLY THEY PAINTED IT WITH THEIR OWN HANDS. THIS IS THEIR PLACE OF WORSHIP AS WELL AS A NATIONAL TREASURE, ENTERED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES. THE WHOLE AREA OF ST. MARY'S AND THE FAIRFAX RAILWAY STATION HAS BEEN DECLARED A HISTORIC DISTRICT AND PLACED UNDER STRICT ZONING LIMITATION TO PREVENT BUILDING ANYTHING THAT COULD DISRUPT ITS CHARACTER.

TAPE: CUT TWO -- O'CONNOR

"DURING THE CIVIL WAR, THIS AREA AT THE BEGINNING OF THE WAR WAS RELATIVELY IMPORTANT BECAUSE OF THE TRAIN STATION JUST, OH, ABOUT HALF A MILE DOWN. THE WOUNDED UNION SOLDIERS WERE BROUGHT FROM SECOND MANASSAS FROM THE BATTLEFIELD THROUGH HERE TO PUT ON THE RAILROAD CARS TO BE BROUGHT BACK TO ALEXANDRIA AND WASHINGTON HOSPITALS. FOR THREE DAYS, THEY USED THIS CHURCH AS A HOSPITAL. THE ARMY JUST TOOK IT OVER OF COURSE FOR THEIR USE. AND THEN CLARA BARTON, ONE OF THE FOUNDERS OF THE AMERICAN RED CROSS, CAME OUT FROM WASHINGTON. SHE WAS WORKING THERE IN ONE OF THE GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS, AND SHE HELPED THE ARMY SURGEONS AND DOCTORS TREAT THE UNION'S SOLDIERS. THERE WERE SOLDIERS ON THE GROUND HERE. THE MORE SERIOUSLY ILL WERE WITHIN THE CHURCH."

NARR: A SIGN IN THE CHURCH COURTYARD COMMEMORATES NURSE CLARA BARTON AND HER DEDICATION TO THE WOUNDED. SHE AND HER FEW HELPERS TENDED THEM FOR THREE DAYS AND NIGHTS WITHOUT REST. THE RAIN POURED ON THOSE WHO COULD NOT BE ACCOMMODATED INSIDE THE CHURCH. SHE TRIED TO COVER THEM, TO STOP THEIR BLEEDING, TO DRESS THEIR WOUNDS, TO FEED THEM HOT SOUP. THE CHURCH SERVED AS AN OPERATING ROOM. DURING COMBAT, THE PASTOR OF ST. MARY'S SERVED AS CHAPLAIN TO BOTH SIDES, TRAVELING BACK AND FORTH FROM ONE CAMP TO THE OTHER. HE WAS EVEN SUSPECTED OF SPYING AND ALMOST GOT SHOT. AND WHEN

NARR: UNION GENERAL PHILIP KEARNY WAS KILLED, THE EULOGY SERVICE  
(CONT'D) WAS HELD IN THIS CHURCH.

TAPE: CUT THREE -- O'CONNOR

"WE FOUND OUT RECENTLY THAT THE BEAMS THAT HOLD UP THE WALLS HERE WERE TAKEN FROM THE NEARBY FOREST. YOU CAN STILL SEE THE X MARKS ON THE BEAMS. THE CHURCH HOLDS ABOUT 150 TO 190 PEOPLE. I WOULD SAY THAT THREE-FOURTHS OF THE BUILDING IS FROM 1860S WHEN THE PARISHIONERS OF ST. MARY'S BUILT IT. THE BACK PART, THE SACRISTY PART, THE BACK END OF THE CHURCH WAS ADDED AT SOME LATER DATE. THE ORIGINAL PEWS WE DO NOT HAVE BECAUSE WHEN THEY USED IT AS A HOSPITAL DURING THE CIVIL WAR, THE SOLDIERS WERE COLD, EVEN THOUGH IT WAS SEPTEMBER. THEY WERE COLD, AND THEY JUST CHOPPED UP THE PEWS FOR THE FIRE OUTSIDE. THEN PRESIDENT GRANT WAS TOLD AND ORDERED THE RESTORATION OF THE PEWS DURING ABOUT THE 1870S."

NARR: THIS CHURCH WAS BUILT BY RAILROAD WORKERS AND FARMERS. IT IS STILL A COMMUNITY OF MODEST PEOPLE. EVERY SUNDAY, SITTING IN THE WHITE PEWS UNDER THE METAL ROOF, THEY HAVE THIS COMFORTABLE AND FAMILIAR FEELING OF BEING PART OF SOMETHING FINE AND PERMANENT. THE FOURTEEN STATIONS ON THE WALLS ARE MODERN. BUT THE ORIGINAL ONES WERE DISCOVERED RECENTLY IN THE CHURCH ATTIC AND WILL BE RESTORED. THE YELLOWISH GRAINED WINDOWS ARE ORIGINAL, ONLY THE FRONT ONES WITH BEAUTIFUL STAINED-GLASS WERE PLACED IN THE 1890S. A NARROW WINDING STAIRWAY LEADS TO THE OLD CHOIR LOFT AND TO THE TOWER WITH A BELL THAT HAS HUNG THERE SINCE THE CIVIL WAR. NOW IT IS RUNG ONLY ON SPECIAL OCCASIONS FOR FEAR THE VIBRATIONS MIGHT DAMAGE THE OLD STRUCTURE.

MANY PARISHIONERS HAVE BECOME REAL HISTORY BUFFS. OWEN REMINGTON, A RETIRED JOURNALIST, SPENDS HIS DAYS SEARCHING IN THE ARCHIVES AND THEN TELLING CHILDREN IN THE LOCAL SCHOOLS ABOUT HIS DISCOVERIES.

TAPE: CUT FOUR -- REMINGTON

"RIGHT UNDER A TREE THAT YOU CAN SEE AS YOU GO OUT NOW IS A BIG MOUND OF BROWN... LOOKS LIKE BROWN ROCK. AFTER SECOND MANASSAS, THE CONFEDERATES BROUGHT IN SEVERAL CARLOADS OF POWDER THAT THEY HAD SEIZED OF THE UNION TROOPS, AND THEY STORED THEM UNDER THE TREES. AND IT RAINED ON THEM AND THE IRON DISINTEGRATED AND IT ALL MELTED DOWN INTO THIS BIG BULK. SO THAT IT IS A REMINDER THERE OF THE CIVIL WAR."

ANNCR: THIS HAS BEEN DATELINE: WASHINGTON, D.C. -- PICTURES IN SOUND OF PEOPLE, PLACES AND EVENTS IN AND AROUND THE NATION'S CAPITAL, BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE VOICE OF AMERICA EACH WEEK AT THIS TIME. TODAY, YOU HEARD ABOUT THE OLD CHURCH OF ST. MARY. NEXT ----- ANOTHER DATELINE.

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